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CLAIMS:

1. An access control system for controlling access to data stored on at least one data storage medium of a
5 computing system, the access control system comprising:
authentication means to authenticate users permitted to access data stored in the at least one data storage medium; and
database means arranged to store data access
10 profiles;
each data access profile being associated with a user permitted to access data stored in the at least one data storage medium;
each data access profile including information
15 indicative of the degree of access permitted by a user to data stored in the at least one data storage medium; and
each data access profile including a master data access profile and a current data access profile, the current data access profile being modifiable within
20 parameters defined by the master data access profile.
2. An access control system as claimed in claim 1, further comprising profile setting means arranged to facilitate creation of the master and current access
25 profiles.
3. An access control system as claimed in claim 2, wherein the access control system is incorporated into a computing system having an operating system and the master
30 data access profile is modifiable only prior to loading of the operating system.
4. An access control system as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein said control system is activatable
35 so as to permit modification of the current access profile and deactivatable so as to prevent modification of the current access profile.

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5. An access control system as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the access control system is implemented at least in part in the form of software.

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6. An access control system as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the access control system is implemented at least in part in the form of hardware.

10 7. An access control system as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the access control system is arranged to govern user access profiles used by a security device configured to control access to a data storage medium.

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8. An access control system as claimed in claim 7, wherein the security device is implemented at least in part in hardware and is of a type located between a data storage medium of a computing system and a CPU of the
20 computing system.

9. An access control system as claimed in claim 7, wherein the security device is implemented at least in part in hardware and is of a type incorporated into bus
25 bridge circuitry of a computing system.

10. An access control system as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein the access control system is incorporated into a computing system having an operating
30 system and the current access profile is modifiable after loading of the operating system.

11. A method of controlling access to data stored on at least one data storage medium of a computing system, the
35 method comprising the steps of:

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providing means for authenticating users permitted to access data stored in the at least one data storage medium; and

storing data access profiles;

5 associating each data access profile with a user permitted to access data stored in the at least one data storage medium;

each data access profile including information indicative of the degree of access permitted by a user to
10 data stored in the at least one data storage medium; and

each data access profile including a master data access profile and a current data access profile; and

facilitating modification of the current data access profile being within parameters defined by the master data
15 access profile.

12. A method as claimed in claim 11, further comprising the step of facilitating creation of the master and current access profiles.
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13. A method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the access control system is incorporated into a computing system having an operating system, and the step of facilitating modification of the current data access profile includes
25 the step of facilitating modification of the master data access profile only prior to loading of the operating system.

14. A method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 13, further including the steps of facilitating activation of said control system so as to permit modification of the current access profile and facilitating deactivation of said control system so as to prevent modification of the current access profile.
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15. A method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 14, wherein the access control system is implemented at least in part in the form of software.

5 16. A method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 15, wherein the access control system is implemented at least in part in the form of hardware.

10 17. A method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 16, further comprising the step of arranging the access control system so as to govern user access profiles used by a security device configured to control access to a data storage medium.

15 18. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein the security device is implemented at least in part in hardware and is of a type located between a data storage medium of a computing system and a CPU of the computing system.

20 19. A method as claimed in claim 17, wherein the security device is implemented at least in part in hardware and is of a type incorporated into bus bridge circuitry of a computing system.

25 20. A method as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 19, further comprising the steps of incorporating the access control system into a computing system having an operating system and facilitating modification of the current access profile after loading of the operating system.

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21. A computer program which when loaded into a computing system causes the computing system to operate in accordance with an access control system for controlling access to data stored on at least one data storage medium of a computing system, the access control system comprising:

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authentication means to authenticate users permitted to access data stored in the at least one data storage medium; and

5 database means arranged to store data access profiles;

each data access profile being associated with a user permitted to access data stored in the at least one data storage medium;

10 each data access profile including information indicative of the degree of access permitted by a user to data stored in the at least one data storage medium; and

each data access profile including a master data access profile and a current data access profile, the current data access profile being modifiable within
15 parameters defined by the master data access profile.

22. A computer useable medium having a computer readable program code embodied therein for causing a computer to operate in accordance with an access control system for
20 controlling access to data stored on at least one data storage medium of a computing system, the access control system comprising:

authentication means to authenticate users permitted to access data stored in the at least one data storage
25 medium; and

database means arranged to store data access profiles;

each data access profile being associated with a user permitted to access data stored in the at least one
30 data storage medium;

each data access profile including information indicative of the degree of access permitted by a user to data stored in the at least one data storage medium; and

each data access profile including a master data
35 access profile and a current data access profile, the current data access profile being modifiable within parameters defined by the master data access profile.